

Message Text

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45

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 ISO-00 OES-03 ACDA-05 CIAE-00 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-07 NRC-05 FEAE-00 DODE-00

AID-05 NSF-01 COME-00 ERDA-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /069 W

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R 091400Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

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INFO USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 0061E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, TECH, AG

SUBJECT: ALGERIA EYES NUCLEAR POWER

1. SUMMARY: HEAD OF ALGERIA'S GAS AND ELECTRIC UTILITY COMPANY RECENTLY RETURNED FROM US WHERE HE HAD DISCUSSION WITH US FIRMS RE FEASIBILITY STUDIES OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS IN ALGERIA. ALGERIAN DESIRE EVENTUALLY TO USE URANIUM RESOURCES IN HOGGAR IN THEIR OWN NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF MET JANUARY 6 WITH ABDENOUR KERAMANE, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SONELGAZ TO DISCUSS LATTER'S RECENT VISIT TO US. KERAMANE EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD ATTENDED ATOMIC INDUSTRIAL FORUM HELD IN SAN FRANCISCO IN DECEMBER. DURING COURSE OF FORUM, HE HAD HAD SIDE MEETINGS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF MAJOR US COMPANIES IN NUCLEAR FIELD INCLUDING GE, WESTINGHOUSE, PARSONS, GIBSON-HILL, AND GENERAL ATOMIC. DISCUSSION, KERAMANE NOTED, HAD CENTERED ON MOUTING FEASIBILITY STUDY TO EXAMINE WHEN AND WHETHER IT WOULD BE PROFITABLE FOR ALGERIA TO EMBARK ON A NUCLEAR POWER GENERATION PROGRAM. KERAMANE ALSO HAD BRIEF CONTACT WITH UNNAMED ERDA OFFICIAL IN WASHINGTON TO DISCUSS US NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS.

3. ACCORDING KERAMANE, PLANS FOR FEASIBILITY STUDY COULD BE FINALIZED THIS YEAR. KERAMANE HIGHLY PRASIED
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US CAPABILITY IN NUCLEAR GENERATION FIELD, AND GAVE

CLEAR INDICATION THAT ALGERIA WOULD PREFER TO SEE US FIRM UNDERTAKE FEASIBILITY STUDY AND ANY EVENTUAL CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT.

4. MOVING TO THINKING BEHIND ALGERIAN PLANS, KERAMANE SAID IT EVIDENT THAT ALGERIAN OIL WOULD NOT LAST FOREVER, AND MORE AND MORE OF NATURAL GAS RESERVES WERE BEING COMMITTED, ESPECIALLY FOR INTERNAL USE. ON THE OTHER HAND, ALGERIA HAD KNOWN BUT UNUSED RESERVES OF URANIUM IN HOGGAR REGION. IT WAS NOT ENOUGH MERELY TO THINK ABOUT EXPLOITING THESE RESERVES FOR EXPORT, KERAMANE SAID. ALGERIA WANTED ALSO TO STUDY WHETHER THESE RESERVES MIGHT BE MORE VALUABLE IF USED BY COUNTRY ITSELF.

5. KERAMANE ADDED THAT REPRESENTATIVE OF SONAREM, ALGERIAN MINERALS CORPORATION, HAD ACCOMPANIED HIM ON VISIT TO US BECAUSE OF CONNECTION BETWEEN URANIUM ORE AND ITS USE AS POWER SOURCE. ANY FEASIBILITY STUDY, KERAMANE SAID, WOULD INVOLVE EVALUATION OF RESEARCH DONE ON EXISTING RESERVES, ASSESSMENT OF NEED FOR MORE EXPLORATION, AS WELL AS MORE CONVENTIONAL STUDY ON FEASIBILITY OF ALGERIA NUCLEAR POWER INDUSTRY BASED ON USING ALGERIAN URANIUM ORE.

6. ALGERIA PLANS ALSO EXPLORE TRAINING IN NUCLEAR ENGINEERING FOR ALGERIAN STUDENTS IN US SCHOOLS. ASKED HOW MANY STUDENTS ALGERIA MIGHT SEND TO US IN THIS AREA, KERAMANE SAID THIS DEPENDED ON HOW MANY US SCHOOLS COULD ABSORB. (HE REQUESTED EMBASSY ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING LIST OF US SCHOOLS THAT GIVE DEGREES IN NUCLEAR ENGINEERING.) ADVERTISEMENTS HAVE ALREADY APPEARED IN ALGERIAN NEWSPAPERS CITING OPPORTUNITIES THAT EXIST FOR YOUNG ALGERIANS TO BE TRAINED IN NUCLEAR SCIENCES.

7. COMMENT: KERAMANE HIMSELF SEEMED WELL AWARE OF US REGULATORY PROCEDURES GOVERNING EXPORT OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS, PROBABLY EXPLAINING HIS UNUSUAL OPENNESS IN RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS. ON SUBJECT OF URANIUM RESERVES, EMBASSY INFORMED BY GERMAN EMBASSY THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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DELEGATION FROM CONSORTIUM OF GERMAN UTILITIES VISITED ALGERIA IN OCTOBER HOPING TO LINE UP CONCESSION RIGHTS FOR URANIUM RESERVES. FOR UNEXPLAINED REASONS ALGERIANS TOLD GERMANS AFTER ONLY TWO HOURS OF CONSULTATION THAT THEY WERE NOT INTERESTED IN GERMAN OFFER. PARKER

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